

Lemon Ginger Cardamom Cupcakes

makes 12-16 cupcakes

Batter

1½ sticks unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)
1 cup granulated sugar
3 large eggs, room temperature
1 tsp almond or vanilla extract
1 tbsp limoncello (optional)
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp salt
1 ½ tsp baking soda
2 tsp ground cardamom
2 ½ tsp ground ginger
1 cup buttermilk
zest of 2 lemons
juice of 2 lemons, approx. just over ¼ cup

1. Preheat oven to 350°F, place cupcake liners in cupcake tins.
2. Using the beater attachment on your stand or hand mixer, whip the butter on high until smooth. Add the sugar and whip into the butter until smooth and fluffy.
3. Switch to the whisk attachment, then add eggs one at a time and continue whipping mixture 2-3 minutes, until mixture turns smooth and slightly pale. Mix in almond extract and limoncello (if using).
4. In a separate bowl, whisk or sift flour, salt, baking soda, cardamom, and ginger together.
5. Add flour mixture in 3 additions alternately with buttermilk in 2 additions, mixing on medium until just combined after each addition.
6. Add the lemon zest and juice and mix until combined.
7. Scoop batter into each cupcake liner until it is halfway full (a little extra is okay).
8. Place on the center rack and bake 20-25 minutes, or until a knife or toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean. Let cool in the tin on a wire rack until the tin is cool enough to handle, then remove the cupcakes from the tin and allow to cool completely.

Cream Cheese Frosting

8 oz full-fat block cream cheese (softened to room temperature)
1/2 c unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)
3 c confectioners' sugar (plus an extra 1/4 cup if needed)
1 tsp lemon extract (or vanilla extract)
1/8 tsp salt

Follow the recipe from [Sally's Baking Addiction](#), except use lemon extract (same amount) instead of vanilla extract. If you don't have lemon extract, then use vanilla extract as prescribed.

Assembly

For decoration, use a 4oz punnet of blackberries or raspberries.

Using a star tip in a piping bag, pipe the cream cheese frosting in circles onto the cupcakes, building a three-layer tower. Place a blackberry on top of each frosting tower; if desired, you can also place a half lemon slice around the blackberry in a semicircle.

Equipment/Ingredient List and Notes

Required Equipment

- Stand mixer or hand mixer
- Spatula
- Large whisk
- Measuring cups / spoons
- Cupcake tin (at least 12 rounds)
- Parchments/baking paper
- Zester or Fine Cheese Grater
- Piping bag and tips (or Ziploc bags)

Optional / Recommended Equipment

- Kitchen Scale
- Citrus juicer / reamer

Ingredient Notes and Suggestions

Butter - salted or unsalted is fine. If you're using salted butter, you can leave the salt out of the sponge and frosting. For both, it is imperative that it has been softened, not melted. I put my butter out on the counter the night before and let it soften over the day. If you forget to do this, you can microwave your butter in 5-second bursts until it's softened, but I don't recommend this except as a last resort, since you may lose some butter to melting.

If you don't want to use butter, vegan butter or coconut oil should work well here--the coconut flavor won't be unwelcome in this cake! Just make sure the oil is solid if you use it. You can also use margarine, but if your choice is between butter and margarine, I strongly recommend butter.

Eggs - these shouldn't be taken straight from the fridge, as that can cause the butter to seize and stop it from incorporating into the batter. Set your eggs out on your counter about an hour or so before you use them. If you forget to do this, you can bathe your eggs in warm (not hot) water for a few minutes. (Again in full disclosure--I do this all the time!) If you don't want to use eggs for the sponge or the curd, check out [this page from My Darling Vegan](#) ("Egg Replacements in Baking" and "Egg Substitutes in Custard"). I'm not familiar enough with this to recommend any particular method unfortunately, but this should give you a good jumping off point.

Almond extract - if you can't eat almonds or you don't want to buy almond extract, you can use vanilla instead. Or if you have lemon extract, go ahead and use that in the sponge!

Limoncello - if you can't have or don't want to use alcohol, you can either replace this in the sponge with 1 tsp lemon extract, or simply just leave it out.

Flour - if you need to make this gluten free, you can substitute a gluten-free baking mix, such as the one from [Bob's Red Mill](#). You can switch it one-for-one with the flour, perhaps just a little bit more, and it should behave very well. You can try to make this mix yourself with brown rice flour, sorghum or white rice flour, corn or potato starch, and xanthan gum; unfortunately I am no expert in gluten-free baking, so I can't advise you super well on the proportions. Therefore, my recommendation would be to just buy the pre-mixed blend if you don't know how to mix it yourself.

Baking soda - once you add in the buttermilk after you add this in, the leavening reaction will begin. It's important that you get your sponges into the oven fairly soon after that, or else there is a chance that they won't rise as much as they need to.

Ground cardamom - this can be expensive! If you need to buy some for this, I know that at least around where I am, there are small containers of spices that are often priced all the same/very accessibly; you don't need very much for this recipe, so it's OK to just get a small container. If you don't know what else to use the remainder for, it's extensively used in Indian cooking, there are lots of Scandinavian baked goods that use cardamom, and I actually like to add just a little bit of cardamom into my coffee grounds when I'm brewing coffee.

Ground ginger - should be generally available from your local grocery store. This is a pungent ingredient; be conservative with your measure, taste your batter after you add all of the flour mixture, and add more ginger in small increments if needed.

Buttermilk - if you don't have any buttermilk, not to worry! It's rather inexpensive and can be purchased in small quantities. But if you're up to the night of this event and don't have any, or you don't want to buy it, [My Baking Addiction](#) has a simple and easy recipe for a substitute that I've used before and can recommend. If you need a non-dairy substitute, [Heart of a Baker](#) tells you how to do this with non-dairy/vegan options.

Lemons - it is possible to find lemon peel in your grocery store spice section, and of course you can buy lemon juice from the grocery store as well. However, my very strong recommendation is to just buy lemons and zest and juice them yourself. It's not a very difficult thing to do! Fresh zest leaks a lot of very fragrant and flavorful oils into your sponge and your curd, and fresh juice also tastes noticeably different from the juice from concentrate you can get from the store.

Cream cheese - Just like the butter, it's imperative that the cream cheese has been left to soften. If you don't want to put it out the night before with the butter, then at least set it out the morning of this event. In case you forget to do this, you can also soften it in the microwave (unwrap it from the foil first!) in short 5-10 second bursts. It's not going to melt in the microwave, but you do want to do short intervallic bursts because microwaves heat very unevenly, and if you have it going for too long at a time, it can start to burn. I recommend you use full-fat cream cheese for the frosting, since the fat is what helps bind the mixture and also lets you spread it easily.

Buy the blocks, don't use the whipped kind as it won't mix up properly.

If you need a vegan option for this, you can substitute vegan butter (you may be able to use coconut oil here as well) and vegan cream cheese one-for-one on the recipe I linked off to. If you can't find vegan cream cheese, [Loving it Vegan](#) tells you how to make it yourself. If you don't want to make frosting, you can buy it from the store, but since it's so simple to make yourself (and often tastes better when you do, I find), I recommend you just make it.

If you don't like cream cheese frosting, you can make another type of frosting; American buttercream is probably the easiest of such options to make. [How to Cook That](#) shows you many different options and even has a taste test on her video, if you want to get an idea of how people react to these types of frosting.